

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to the 55th issue of *Ibbetson Street*. On the front cover is the always evocative work of Julia Kanno, and on the back cover you will experience the photography of Phil Temples. In this issue you will find the poetry of Rhina P. Espaillat, Alfred Nicol, Jennifer Barber, Denise Provost, George Kalogeris, Mary Buchinger, Charles Coe, Gloria Mindock, Gary Metras, Lainie Senechal, and many other fine poets.

We would like to thank our poetry editor Harris Gardner, our managing editor, Lawrence Kessenich, and our designer and jack-of-all trades Steve Glines for putting this magazine together.

The Ibbetson Street Press/Endicott College Young Writers Series continues to release books by talented undergraduates. This spring we released a book of poetry called *Beloved Imperfections of a Shattered Heart* by Jennifer Purcell. We would like to thank Emily Pineau, for her hard work as director of the series. Emily is leaving Ibbetson Street Press to pursue other passions and interests in her life. We wish her well.

We want to thank Endicott College for their continued support. Professors Dan Sklar, Sam Alexander and Mark Herlihy have been instrumental for Ibbetson Street's success at Endicott College.

—Doug Holder, June, 2024

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A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE FUNERAL

Memory-work Margret counsels
from her house of mirrors

work it through
the good and the bad

my friend shares a dialect
with my mother

the hole doesn't go away
you fill it with memories

her father's gold watch hangs
in her empty white room

In my garden the ivy's beginning
to crisscross the terra cotta brick wall

on small feet little-leafed
runners fan across the edges

bees will feed at blossom-fonts
load pockets with pollen

and birds will snip at clumps
of blue-black berries

wings ruffling up
a cascade of falling fruit

what's not caught in beaks
will skitter down brick to brick

—*Mary Buchinger*

LEFT OVER

She wears her mother's winter coat, reflects
on the life her mother never had—all the sacrifices
the husband that was never there,
and when he was, he wasn't the one she'd imagined

married at sixteen years and so much in love so
flamboyant, faded photos on the mantel
a smile no one ever saw, collapsing seduction
fading into the gray woman who held her daughter
and cried. And now

the woman looking at the old photographs
has become her mother, wearing
her clothes and fighting against this natural
orientation. She remembers the small woman, grown old
in this same house, lawnmower
squealing banging in the back yard, echoing her father's

private mantra of muttered terror. It's easy to forgive
now, after all this time, and again,
she thanks God they had the sense
to keep guns out of the house.

—*Holly Day*

PLEASE SHOW / YOUR ANIMAL / FACE.

- Hannah Larrabee, "Smokey Bear on Tinder"

This is mine, and I, for one, am scared.
Its mouth: wet as fallen
blossoms on another man's
sidewalk. Who owns it, anyway,
the path we take? The city—its sheaves
of paper, its ecoconscious webforms crisping,
morphing, crisping, on a hundred
touch-smear screens. Possession.
My animal eyes—slivered, tender
as a steak this man might eat, so rare
my blood would pool
at his inner elbow. My animal
body is a thousand snarled desires
and none of life's big questions,
just undomesticated instinct—no need
to hold my face between two soft hands,
trying to fence myself in.

—Laurin Becker Macios

SPLINTER

Iowa, 1958

1

From childhood it's my job to keep my father's silence.
Often, we're alone.
He takes me skating, to the beach,
the package store where he buys liquor.
My mother stays at home to tend my younger sister.

I'm thirteen, determined to be thin, invisible
as a molecule, a splinter buried deep,
eating only vegetables, tiny bits of meat,
no matter how much food my mother forces
on me, her anger cold as a revolver.
We form a triangle: mother, father, me.
My sister doesn't count.

2

Sunday dinner. We sit stiffly in mother's Windsor chairs.
The tablecloth is spotless, a ruby water goblet
positioned at each place.
Finish that bit of pork, she orders.
I take one small bite, spit it in my napkin,
cough, as if I swallowed wrong.

I scrape my plate when no one's looking.
It's thrilling to get rid of food, easy as a lie . . .

3

In hospital I weigh sixty-nine pounds.
A girl with red hair in the next bed has leukemia.
Her body's bloated, white. She mostly sleeps.
I stare and stare. I don't think about *my* body,
or what will happen next. The girl beside me dies.

But why don't you want to eat? the kind young doctor asks.

—*Nellie Goodwin*

VESPERS

I should go out and gather in what's important,
it's Michaelmas, after all, and Sukkot too,
according to the calendar on my kitchen wall.

The neighbors' lights are off at last,
so, under the Harvest Moon I start a backyard fire,
and sit surrounded by my garden.

Beyond the firelight I can hear night creatures
in the milkweed and hyssop, broadleaf aster
and lavender, prairie dock and bloody cranesbill.

There's a skunk out tonight for certain, usually
black-eared possums too, and sometimes, raccoons
lumber down the fence line on their clever paws;

all those hairy wild saints marching through
their own liturgies, calendars of wind and rain,
communions kept hidden from a gardener's meddling.

I watch the fire for answers but it just burns away
time and experience, and won't tell me anything
I don't already know.

The beauty of this word flares and passes away,
a curl of wood smoke carries
its own prayers into dark skies.

—*Fritz Eifrig*

SIGNS AND WONDERS

In the underground bus station, a sudden bird!
A tiny black bird at my feet so bustling, so intent—
a message maybe?

Delusional, I know—
ill-suited as I am (fleshed in fear, dust, and dreams)
to carrying messages.

Just let me think, I've often said—
instead of tending grandkids, feeding the dog,
or helping to choose a new refrigerator—

as if my imaginings mattered more
than snacks, walks, Sub Zero or Frigidaire.

That gleam on the bus station's red brick floor
is only cellophane, not sword or morning star,

nor is the woman whose gray beak
grows from the back of her head Thoth,
or one of Bosch's damned—

only an old woman who has slid her mask
behind an ear to keep it handy.

Still, we list sights and sorrows, ask for explanations:
a bent woman tells the bus driver how she's suffered—
Such pain, she says, *and me a hospital chaplain*.

Sun today, gaunt trees creaky with chirps, something
trying to begin again. Or not.
A mistake, trying to make sense of things.

Shh, my dog says when I get home. *Listen:*
kibble clanking in the bowl.

—*Ruth Hoberman*

NO PEACE IN THE MOUNTAINS

The clouds go on offering faces,
all of them strangers',
and the waterfall,
a lavish temple
to disruption, sings itself hoarse,

blues mostly, but all kinds of music,
while lightning asks again
if tomorrow will please
just stop
making outrageous promises.

Longing derives from more
than mere distance, appearing
unpredictably as fog
obscuring ghostly deer,
dangerous to drivers.

Evening here can be a friend
who needs more than you have,
or a brother far away,
with even more failures
than miles between you.

There is no good way to say
too late, but remember where
we started? That beloved city?
All down the avenue
the young trees in their cages.

—*Richard Hoffman*

THE MASTER

The Kung-Fu master felt their vulnerabilities
as if they were his own, honed in on them
like a hawk dropping from the clouds.

One after another he brought them
to their knees, watched them crawl
from the mat in agony. Undefeated,

he stood before the mirror and suddenly
saw his grave mistake. It was easy
to cause pain, much harder to relieve it.

A true master would know how.

He started over, reversed
the energy of heart and hands,
learned to give instead of take away,

to sit quietly instead of parading
himself before admirers. He
who had been the envy of the world

was soon forgotten. Only those in pain
found him. His hands, which had once
brutalized people, withdrew their pain,

released it into the all-forgiving sky.

—*Lawrence Kessenich*

CASTA DIVA, A PRAYER FOR PEACE

I heard you are looking for me.

In the early morning,
so quiet,
you can hear everything;
turkeys, geese,
exhausted lingering exchanges of their longings,
birds have not awakened.

You must hear something in that vast silence.
Yet you are still searching.
Didn't the rising sun show you the path?
Too bright, too dazzled?
And the heat at high noon,
too hot?
Too much anguish?

You waited for me after sunset.
When Luna rises behind the hill,
pulls the moon with her white chariot,
who is singing Casta Diva?
Maria Callas?
Montserrat Caballe?
Bring back all the longings, anguish,
and the hidden passion, conflict.

I see you light a candle.
Advent? Hanukkah?
Or just for the long, dark night,
so I can find you?

—*Livingston Rossmoor*

SONGBIRD

For Helen

Her voice was a round crystal glass
traced by a wet finger, and it wavered
like a needle on a warped record.

In the silence of my family, she hunched
over the piano to sing hymns,
her hands curved like a nest.

Shaking between chords, coursing
from some unseen current, her fingers
were almost too light to depress the keys.

She played at the boundary of sound,
begging us to listen—*see the morning has come,*
let us whisper or it will fly away.

Her memory was clear as a single note.
Each line rose and beat into the next,
a takeoff practiced countless evenings,

the verses coming from a place outside
herself, like knowing the way
home from wherever she'd been.

—*John Moessner*

BOWLS OF DUST

Children eat bowls of dust
as snapping bones and breaking hearts
fill their ears

Once amid pomegranate blossoms
they sucked fruit mouths dripping juice
while playing in the breeze

Now smoky wind whistles past their dreams
clotted like milk on shriveled cheeks
sorrow is too kind a word

Despair does not fly off on shattered wings
she rips and claws at once-upon-a-time
trying to build a nest in their hearts

—Molly Lynn Watt

NARRAGANSETT SUMMER

We are quiet together
retreat from sharp sun

summer's hot breath
quivering the hairs on our arms

copper light
slides through
slatted shades—

two house cats we lie
curled around each other

the curve of your leg
against the arch

of my calf
the habit of us—

through half-closed lids
I look to see if you have risen

gone to watch the day diminish
over the smudged line

of blue horizon
and on to purple dusk—

one more sun
slips away

—*Ruth Chad*

GRATEFUL

For the wishbone that gave me
what I didn't know to want;
for bramble and conifer,
orchid and dandelion;
for the power failure that brings us
candlelight; for breakfast
after a sleepless night,
sunny-side up in fresh butter;
for the grain of sand,
the oyster, the pearl;
for the cliff's edge
from which we can see
the meadow behind us,
the sparkle of the sea below.

—*Laura Cherry*

THE LARCH'S TALE

The moment of turning
from girl to tree
a wave went down
my body, each cell
grew a dumb wall.

Smooth thin bark,
danger no more
outside, without words,
safe from feeling,
I grow rings,

shed my golden
needles each fall,
toughen my skin
to a dark cracked crust,
reach up, always up.

Now in snowmelt
my pulse rushes.
Come touch me,
old terrors—pink buds
will waft my name.

—*Gayle Roby*

PERSIMMON

Fruit as a foreign object,
pollen cloud pointing south
a signal of its demise downwind.

Slacken the rhythm and soon you'll learn
the daunting wood-greyness of charcoal
in spite of the fire, ripening seams of sugar
and a displacement of earth.

Fretful hands scatter over their makework
with watery grace, as languid fingers spiral
then discard the peel, yet still
they reveal such colours as these.

—*Luke Dunne*

HOW TO MAKE CANDIED CITRON

The citron nestles in the palm of my hand,
the skin of the fruit
waiting to be sugared.

On this icy January day, let the yellow
be a balm, a pollination of color,
a circularity between seasons.

Take a moment for wonder.
Did the fruit come from Yemen? or perhaps from Calabria?
Imagine its place on the tree, in the grove, on the hill.

Italians add the candied citron to panettone or pastry,
my Jewish community will serve
it to celebrate the birthday of the trees, *Tu Bishvat*.

Cut the fruit into two hemispheres,
scrape out the seeds and pulp.
The citron remains shy and protected

its seeds dug deep in the snow of its body.

Unlike its cousins, the blood orange, kumquat
and clementine, the fruit of the citron is not edible,
except for the outer skin.

Prepare to crystalize the rind in a sugar bath,
a honeying.

Slice the skin into strips.
The fruit will resist, leathery,
reluctant, holding its shape.

Then cut the strips into squares.
Place them in a pan over flame,
Submerge the peel in water.

Let the peel become translucent
as the water evaporates into floral steam.

Drain what remains of the syrup.
Add three cups of sugar and cook at a crisp pace,
careful not to burn the peel.

Cook briskly, do not let it reach
a roiling boil.

Notice how everything transforms.

Sugar crystals forming on the edge of the pan,
sweetness coating everything --
the pan my hair my hands.

Enter into the sweetness.

Molten syrup bubbles like glass,
the sugar rising, becoming viscous,

snow ice on the edge of the pan.

Add the fruit into a bowl, admire
how it resembles amber.
Fruit crystallized like a memory.

Toss the fruit in sugar for crunch.
Let cool for the good part of the day.

How can something contain so much sugar
& yet be so beautifully bitter?

—*Deborah Leipziger*

A CLUE

Miss Scarlet's in the kitchen wiping off the cleaver.
Though Mrs. White lies dismembered on the floor,
Miss Scarlet hums like a frenzy of bees, remembering
nights singing jazz at the Plaza, flirting
with well-heeled patrons and smoking
between sets. That's how she wound up
in John Boddy's drafty mansion, a suspect
in his murder. Never trust a sugar daddy
who wants you to dress like a maid and dust,
watch you play sous chef to his cook, but she's
in charge of dinner now. What shall she serve
tonight? Quail in Colonel Mustard sauce?
More than once she's felt him press
his waxy mustache on her neck.
She's not the kind of cook to use a recipe
and she likes the kitchen to herself.
Despite that shimmering page boy, that tight red dress,
she'll play the 50's housewife.
Plenty of knives left to sharpen.

—*Kathleen Agüero*

THIS IS JUST A CHICKEN

- after William Carlos Williams'
"This Is Just To Say" &
"The Red Wheelbarrow"

I have stolen
the chicken
that was in the rain
barrel

and which you
were probably
planning to glaze
and broil

forgive me
it was so white
and so happy
rolling down the
hill in my red wheel
barrow

—*Tom Laughlin*

LOOKING UP

What it really came down to was
you were looking up and didn't see
two skateboards, electric, ridden toward you
from both directions at great speed.
The riders were decent enough to stop
and help you up off the sidewalk, seeming
pleased you weren't bleeding or bawling
about being broken anywhere. Both assured you
their boards were set to max at 25 mph,
a modest rate on any American sidewalk.
Other pedestrians skirted their passage
with scarcely a note of alarm or disapproval.
"Are you stoned?" one asked companionably,
noting the slight smile on your comfortably
shocked expression. The other suggested
you must have been looking up. You wanted
to humor these reckless young bastards
who were being so nice to you, but no words
fit your vision of the moment. Just one of those
no-fault situations, right? You really were
looking up, weren't you? And they were
gods of speed, their danger innocent, no harm
intended to the folks on foot. It all became
a lesson in what's up there, your fascination
an obstructive, unintended insult
to nice kids keeping pace with modern times.

—*Tomas O'Leary*

EASTER SUNDAY

She didn't send me the photograph.
A woman had taken snaps of us
with my daughter's phone.

Maybe we had our eyes closed,
as if we couldn't bear the thought
that we wouldn't all be together again.

—*Triona McMorow*

WHEN I DIE

When I die
have me stuffed and mounted
over the mantel of your fireplace
next to that portrait you like so much

You know the one

that shot of Ernest Hemingway
standing next to an 8 foot marlin
glistening in the sun

Hang my body
as a scarecrow in your flower garden
stuck between the dogwoods and delphiniums

dressed in safari jacket and pith helmet
raggedy limbs
swinging in the breeze

Use me as a weathervane
tethered to a lightning rod
spinning in the wind

Put my ashes in a gilded box
on the mantel of your fireplace
under that photograph you like so much

You know the one

that shot of the old man and the sea
next to an 8 foot marlin
glistening in the sun

—*Michael Maxwell*

FOR RUBY BRIDGES

In the Norman Rockwell painting “Ruby Bridges The Problem We All Live With,” you are being escorted into the segregated school by federal marshals. We see four of them in the frame, two walking ahead, two behind, but we don’t see their faces.

A thrown tomato is smashed on the wall behind you. You walk straight ahead, past the red guts dripping down and piled on the sidewalk, past the faint ghost of “NIGGER” painted on the wall someone tried, with limited success, to scrub away.

Ruby, what can we possibly say about you? What words can describe this six-year-old girl, armed with only a notebook and ruler, walking resolutely past that pack of jabbering hyenas, past the woman who every day would threaten to poison you, past the woman who every day would wave before your face a black doll in a coffin?

You never cried once during that nightmare year. What can we possibly say about you, brave as an astronaut climbing into a tin can to be launched into the airless void?

—*Charles Coe*

INVITATION TO HAMAS

Come out, assassin, from behind the claim
that murder is the other half of prayer.
If Allah lives, you have not blessed his name;
if he does not, he is a mask you wear.

Give up the refuge stolen from the text
you twist into directives for your thugs;
there have been thugs before. Like you, the next
will shrink to footnote while the future shrugs.

Square your accounts: shoulder your life and come
out of those villages in which you hide
behind the women's skirts. Step cleanly from
the innocent, the old who have not died

yet, and the children on their laps. Come out
and tell the truth: can you be quite secure,
simply because you gird yourself about
with guiltless people, that you're safe and sure

because their guiltlessness disarms the strong,
shames them to mercy? Mercy has an end,
and hardens down to steel before too long.
Step away from them now and be their friend—

Your hosts, the hostages you hide among—
for once, their friend: give them the choice to live
you did not give our unsuspecting young.
That may be the one thing you have to give.

—*Rhina P. Espaillat*

AS SHADOWS THEY COME

Slip barefoot through the lane's thick grass
over the tumble down wall
through a window.
Within,
a dark breath of dirt clings
to the empty room; something scuttles away.

Somewhere,
in a lost corner mixed with
dirt pebbles are buttons of black silver or bone;
when polished they'll call for the cloak
of night that travels to unknown
places.

Hidden
in cracks are coins for the ride
across the narrow stream that swirls down the gorge
from the alpine meadow bright with daisies,
and offer the purchase of the gift
of happiness.

Still wrapped in raffia the ginger jar holds dirt
and dusty air; no pungent breath
of dried, pickled or
candied
root. Within emptiness is
the possibility of unimagined strangeness.

—*Molly Mattfield Bennett*

LEAVING DÚN CHAOIN

When I leave, I like it to rain.
Not so the sky is crying
at my departure, but so the sun
is not showering a pathway
of light over the white
morning glories opening, so that
the boat for Blascaid Mór is not
glinting against the blue-grey water
and the curve of the cliff,
so that everything is
not sparkling, including the thrush
in the fuschia hedge, so that
the cottages on the far hill
can not be seen, so that the green,
the verdant, the emerald land
is not shimmering in its many
colors, so that the pocket of darkness
over my heart is matched
by a dark-fisted, dark-hearted cloud of a day,
so that I can be unhappy and leave.

—*Susan Lloyd McGarry*

THE DEAR FRIENDS

We old girls glow.
We are afternoons fields,
rustles and sunshine.

We are round
as the mid-day sun,
and as bold.

Fearless and bright,
we dance as fast
or slow as we like.

The tempo is autumn,
our laughter a full harvest

—*Eileen McCluskey*

5:30 AM WALKERS

I thank you, God,
for life, for our yeses
blurting through dawning laughter.
These friends, all waiting for me, held
back until I was old enough to see
better and care for gifts such as these.

How sweet and good
you are to know our names,
to collect us one by one,
pluck our imperfections
and needs, and gather
us in this lifetime.

And what do we see
in each other as we
walk the road, mostly airy,
full of cackles, occasionally
facing the gutting grief?
That we are in each other's care.

How did you know
where to find us?
Has the music
in our step always
been in harmony,
waiting for our yes?

—*Karen Aroian*

A BILLION DOLLARS

Nobody *earns*
a billion dollars a year.

Man, woman or child – one may churn
them into their private hidey-hole
like a whale sifting crill from tons
of ocean into its cavernous belly.

Magazines list and rank such figures.
Analysts sift means and reasons.
Town criers on multiple media
make them celebs, stars, gurus.

But *nothing*
one human being does is, in any instance,
worth anything like such a haul.
One must, perforce, suck sustenance
from another – labor, life, soul.

Suck
from many, steal from millions, usurp from many millions.
Rob a little here, skim a bit more there, scam here and there –
if not everywhere, multi-where.

Theft, larceny, robbery –
such words fit acts at, say, a C-store,
acts of, perhaps, preteens at a Macy's,
of a gun trained on a cash register –
acts all, all agree, awful, all criminal, and worthy
of pursuit, prosecution, and punishment.

But *this* –
in its astonishing scale,
its appalling alibi,
its even more appalling acceptance –
is the Big Lie.

—Llyn Clague

THE MAZE YOU TRAVEL

Like a secret garden behind a Victorian home
Lost among bushes and trees
Turning a corner only to find more corners
Paths leading to dead ends

People passing with blank faces
Empty stares of yearning
Or hands feeling ahead as if
The follower is blind or in the dark

Pathways of pebbles give hope
Yet lead nowhere except deeper into
The hidden world of lost rabbits and mice
Where no bird alights

Groping for a leaf with no meaning, no direction
A branch points the way out
Is it forgotten reality
Or is it subterfuge

An end with no meaning
A meaning with no end
Like a book with no pages
A song with no sound

Up ahead there is an opening
Beyond the opening an exit
You emerge victorious from
The maze you are traveling in

—*Zvi A. Sesling*

THIS VERSE BUSINESS

Playwright Andy Dolan discusses his one man play about Robert Frost
Interview by Doug Holder, Co-President of the New England Poetry Club

Recently, I had the chance to speak to playwright Andy Dolan, about a one man show he wrote concerning the late, great poet Robert Frost. The play was performed at the Calderon/Huntington Theatre in Boston in April. From the theater's website:

Emmy-winner (NYPD Blue), IRNE-winner (Man in the Ring), and Tony-nominee, Gordon Clapp, as poet Robert Frost, who “barded” around the country for nearly 50 years giving sold-out talks to mixed crowds of readers and non-readers alike. Arguably the nation’s first superstar poet, he quipped, “What began in obscurity is ending in a blaze of publicity.

A beguiling rascal on the platform, the poet “re-lives” his verse from memory, relates his “wild surmises” on science, politics, and religion, and speaks to the purpose and meaning of art. Then, inviting us home, he drops his mask, shares losses and regrets, considers the sources of his poetic inspiration, and picks up his pencil.

Andy Dolan (AD): Thanks for helping to get the word out to the Somervillians! I lived off Highland Avenue for a decade while employed at a conference center at Harvard.

Doug Holder (DH): There has been so much written about Frost. Have there been many plays—one-man plays, etc.—that have dealt with Frost, the poet, the man? What is special about your presentation that makes it worthwhile for the audience to revisit him?

AD: I believe my play is the only one that shows how incredibly entertaining Frost was in public—a delightfully witty platform performer like Mark Twain. His “talks” were legendary and usually sold out. He’d share his humorous “wild surmises” on politics, science, religion, as well as his poems, and often his beliefs about the purpose and meaning of art. Donald Hall composed a presentation in the 60s featuring four actors who played characters in the poems and people in his life, but mine’s the first script to use the recordings of his public talks.

DH: I am on the board of the Longfellow House in Cambridge—so I know a bit about Longfellow. His poems were on the tip of everyone's tongue. I believe Frost continued that tradition of the “populist” poet. Your take?

AD: I think you’re right. And Frost probably exceeded Longfellow’s popularity. He “barded around” the country for 50 years, and, from all his TV and radio appearances, an argument could be made that he was the nation’s first “superstar poet.”

DH: Are there any special challenges about writing a one-man play?

AD: With just one person addressing the audience, the surprises and drama must come from a single character. Luckily that character in my play is the brilliant and beguiling Robert Frost.

DH: The accomplished actor Gordon Clapp—who was well-known as portraying a hard-nosed detective on *NYPD Blue*—plays Frost. Why do you think he is a good fit? Is there any physical resemblance?

AD: I couldn't have asked for a more perfectly suited actor. He not only looks like him, but Gordon, from New Hampshire, has had Frost in his pocket for 50 years and long wanted to portray the poet on stage.

DH: What are some of the poems that will be recited during the course of the play?

AD: In the play, Frost “re-lives” the poetry from memory. Included are some of the famous ones like “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening,” “The Road Not Taken,” “Birches,” “Mending Wall,” but several others including “Come In,” “Choose Something Like a Star” and “The Death of the Hired Man,” where Gordon portrays both the husband and wife in the poem.

DH: I know many poets will be interested in this play—how about non-poets? Do you think Frost's flinty persona will draw these folks in?

AD: I suspect Frost appealed to as wide a cross-section of the public as any poet ever has. Poetry readers and non-readers alike flocked to his sold-out talks. He was as funny as he was profound, I think, and we've seen from years of performances how general theatre audiences have been delighted by this “poet play.”

DEVOTION

the rabbit pulls fur
from her body to insulate
the nest for her kits

the robin selects a sheltered branch
the heron one close
to water and food

as the days lengthen tulips daffodils
crocuses buds on the trees

*he took the poem right out
of my mouth* I sometimes feel
withdrawing to solitude

the atmosphere hovers bands
of color beckoning

what are we but our stories

the earthworm must be waking
how did it live through winter

if my children were having
children the world would change

is the pond waking do the ducks
dabble and begin their rituals

should I change
myself

the air is made of ghosts
see how they stir the trees

I can't imagine it

my feelings hurt
I carry them within me
everyone does

brimming pools
sunlight on the houses

to what will I devote myself

the tree he planted will bear its fruit
in seventy years

I see such shadows stirring

—*Hilary Sallick*

WOOD FROGS

Today my diminutive March
companions, the wood frogs, emerged
with their quack-like voices
that call from the vernal pool.
There is some relief,
some comfort, in the sound.
Spring has come again,
in spite of the conflicts,
the warming climate,
the concerns for the future.
Spring is here!
Frogs pay no attention
to our human woes.
It is time to make new frogs
so the species survives.
They are set on the task.
Wake up!
Sing for mates!
Procreate!
A seemingly simple life
embedded in the beginning
of the season. A reminder
that no matter what occurs
spring arrives.

—*Lainie Senechal*

NASTURTIUMS FOR DINNER

Before my mother lost her parents,
her eldest grandson, her will
to swallow
she planted a garden—
impatiens, plump marigolds
tended the bleeding heart
with its flawless teardrops
cooked August tomatoes
my father's bluefish
an orange nasturtium
ablaze on each plate.
Now, the police stop her for driving
on the sidewalk, gin bottles
spring up in dresser drawers,
under sofa cushions, roll beneath the bed.
She calls at midnight—
Her father in a fedora lurks
outside the window,
has stolen all the spoons.

—*Grace Massey*

SHORTENING DAYS

Throw your face up
to the evening sun.
Ignore stray chin hairs,
wrinkles or scars.

These are the days
we gather to us,
storing the warmth
for the cold of winter.

—*Triona McMorow*

AFTER READING EMILY DICKINSON

I hear decay upon the grass —
and see its dew drenched teeth
chewing the filth of ages that pass —

Such sustenance — piles high
as the present slips to past
and the future draws nigh

The face of future bares its teeth
and grins with scarlet tongue —
displaying human flesh — its meat

Some are partially saved —
their bones favored and passed
on as relics — and not graved.

—*Gary Metras*

MONET—1922

His world became burnt yellow, orange-red;
edges blurred and he abandoned blue.
His Footbridge seemed on fire. Colors bled.
He used large labels, order, *deja vu*.

His giant canvases showed bold wide strokes.
Broad brushes captured light that burst and scattered.
A trusted confidant would dare to coax
him to agree to surgery. Sight mattered.

“It is to my great chagrin that I
regret...[I] had this fatal operation.”
Daylight in his operated eye,
a dull blue-gray, begged his imagination
as every shape was magnified, distorted—
all his wondrous expectations thwarted.

—*Paulette Demers Turco*

FAKING IT TO SURVIVE—HEADING TO BARCELONA #53

Walking through canyons of crowd noise cushioned slightly
since Malaga Féria's over we're heading to Barcelona
reading novels to push through slow crawling hours

Fernando's in the middle of what he calls a devil book
impressive despite stereotypic language quivering like a veil of
distrust between supposed lovers calls it the fertility of evil

the pointlessness the pettiness of feigned innocence mixed with
phony obedience and too many evasions to count not sure whether
to consider them lies or self protection or faking it to survive

in the Valencia airport we see a priest greeting a big family
gathered for some occasion then a pilot arriving that
Fernando labels the movie-star hair-dresser type

later says he's remembering echoes of long-hidden secrets
suspects his family's Converso part of the Jewish thousands
forbidden their identity stripped of traditional symbols and rituals

coerced to silence by official doctrine so many killed who dared
resist inquisition powers those alive shivering in fear until even
memory's a risk too dangerous that gets canceled negated by terror

sitting in this airport exhausted waiting to get on a plane to Barcelona
we're considering what he suspects is hidden history of crypto ancestors
like numb scars that need to reopen and bleed whatever the cost in pain

I thought I married a lapsed Catholic and my family's Jewish have to
ask again are you certain as it's so far back how to trace a path with
nothing to follow except shadows of blood memory doubtful any

relatives know recalling again how his dying dad clutched a crucifix
he hopes the cosmic spirit understands faking it to survive and maybe
somewhere in the buried muddle of generations there's a stray seed of truth.

—*Nina Rubinstein Alonso*

LAST JULY

I was grieving,
in the thick of it,
when I heard a laughing gull's
ha-ha-ha-ha-haah.
Another joined in,
haah-haah-ha-ha-ha.
I stopped to empty
the sand from my shoes.
The laughter of the gulls
wasn't out of spite:
it was their call to each other.
A flock of terns
splintered the sun.
They curved and banked
and flew away.
The waves shook drops
of brightness into the air.
I was grieving, I was laughing,
in the thick of it.

—*Jennifer Barber*

AFTER YOU GO

Grief touches the sky
when writing letters
to the deceased.
We know where
Joe DiMaggio 'go'
But that's not real.

No one makes
our longings
into a song
or into a flower
or sugar, it's simple, Simon,
God cares

for the loved ones,
though we are ones
needing it, left looking
up with paper and pen
praying the message is received
if impossible to address.

—*Timothy Gager*

WHY I PERSIST

Age has its humiliations, body
going its own way, producing
pain from organs I didn't know
existed, turning eating into risk.

Age has its pleasures, loyal
friends. The ease after ambition's
hot air balloon has grown tiny
in the sky and then vanished.

The love of long partners,
stronger toward the end when
each day is a milestone, gift
surprise. We're gentler. I still

find his face a lighthouse
in the storm of pain, his body
all I ever wanted in bed.
Other women are no threat.

Those flirtations that felt
fraught are just an old joke
now. I tend my garden

while I still can.

—*Marge Piercy*

TERRA INCOGNITO

After all the years you and your spouse
lived first in a university town,
then in a city full of promise
then a suburb landscaped by success

now, your spouse can not remember
your long-time telephone number, gets lost
while driving on familiar streets,
hides the checkbook but forgets where,

and both of you cross an invisible border
into a whole new country, dementia.

—*Robert K. Johnson*

STARBUCKS

I'm meeting my father here.
He died nearly thirty years before
a place like this ever existed.

For fifteen cents, he could enjoy
a mug of joe at The Busy Bee,
Burt and Dave's, The Parkway Diner—

but no, more likely I'd find him
dream-worn at his own kitchen table,
blue flannel robe, aura of forsythia,

pouring a fresh cup, cream, two sugars.
To an eight-year-old, the coffee smell
on his breath seemed intoxicating,

alluvial, a bitter intimacy.
Now I find a seat beside the window,
buy each of us a tall latte and

sit patiently, watching the corona
of our milky foam, sipped by time,
retreating.

—*Steven Ratiner*

OPTIONS

In the beginning,
we had time to tally
who spited, who hurt,
who forgave first.

We could nurse our anger
for weeks turning it into a game,
until one of us cried "Uncle."

We bullied time thinking
it would never fight back,
but now time wins and winds
around us with an aging wisdom.

It hardly matters who dirtied
the new white towels,
forgot to turn off the lights,
lock the back gate,
ate the last poppy seed muffin,
broke the porcelain coffee mug,
or refused to kill the spider.

One of us will always be left
hungry, in the dark, afraid
of things that crawl into open entryways.

In our waning days together,
we can no longer waste
the time that stretches between us.

Our history is branded by the flames we create.
We can choose to stay in the pan, or jump into the fire.

—*Laurie Kuntz*

WHAT WAS REALLY MEANT

I saw you a month before we met,
dressed like a bohemian from my childhood.
You passed me without notice.
I watched you walk farther away.
I could not move—
enveloped in the sense of us
which had not happened yet.

From fifty feet away
you looked over your shoulder,
feeling the sense of a stare
like humans do.

At that moment
as if released from a spell
I quickly turned away.

Thirty days passed
before our eyes unexpectedly met.

You beckoned me with a finger
and probing stare.
It was a magnetic force
which stood us face to face.

You boldly bragged a brief biography

Although disheartened by your ego
I felt our intensity.

We were two halves of a whole
separated by a gaping fault
which mapped our separate history.

Despite all sense of foreboding
we became a constant trying to fit.
With limbs woven and undulating
like waves in a storm
grasping each other to anchor.

In the omen of being star crossed
we inhaled kisses to soothe
the tides of what separated us.

Coming together again and again
in our yearning

for what only I could sustain,
your bitterness was founded.

Only a few short years
held a lifetime of possibilities
in the depth of us.

I found myself again
at another shoreline,
carrying within the life we made
and what was really meant—
before waving in the ache of goodbye.

—*Bridget Seley Galway*

CALL THE FURIES

Someone has to avenge
those who are wronged.
Still, they might have let
sleeping dogs lie
left to their own devices
but once they joined hands
they were a force to be reckoned with
and the more they plotted
the madder they got
until they were furious—
justifiably so! No father
should ever sacrifice a daughter
to his ambitions, and no son
should murder his mother—
or madness will result.
Though a wife may have reason
to kill her spouse...

Over time, it became plain,
no one should break an oath
or make promises he never intends to keep.
Or threaten a rival—
A daughter, a wife, a mother!

So, we pray their vengeance
will be swift and terrible.

—*Ed Meek*

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING

You tell me I'm going deaf
(if I've heard you right),
and that could be the case:
I'm old enough;
listened to loud music
long, crazy nights
spent half in a daze;
never wore mufflers
drilling through brick
or sawing down trees.

And yet...it's only you.
The others don't seem to mutter,
swallow their words,
mix up their *bs* with their *ds*;
I don't keep asking "who?"
or "what's her name d'you say?",
stopping the story dead
till some kind soul explains,
leads me out of the woods
and onto the track again.

No, it's only with you and me
that meanings go astray.
Perhaps you think, after all these years,
we live in each other's head,
our questions understood
before they're fully uttered,
no "what?" or "when?" or "why?":
that true lovers should telepathize.
"Is that how you see it?" I say.
"What dear?" comes your reply.

—Derek Healy

DOING TIME IN THE ATTIC

going through accretions that bind
like an outgrown skin—things my mother
left behind, saved and stored with mine.
Time to lighten the burden my children
will one day face—shed the unread books,
dishes nobody needs, gewgaws, letters,
playbills, all my ski-lift tickets, drawings
embossed with childish scrawls—shades
of my mother, who dreaded dying less
than letting go of her cherished possessions.

The parallels aren't lost on me, yet
sifting through the amalgam of our lives
I become derailed by old photo albums—
ours combined spanning almost a century.
How blessed those bygone years—babies
to sweeten the hours, my husband then
young and healthy, an empathetic mother—
the best of allies, my pal. Days I grapple
with mortality, I could use a mother....
I imagine bringing her back—somehow
cloning her—but even if she were molded
from the same clay, she would be a mere
semblance of the mother I knew unless
she lived *her* life over again—what
none of us can do, and, oh, what rue!

—*Linda M. Fischer*

SWEET WONDER

Perhaps you have felt it too—
there's someone over your shoulder
and you turn around
and nobody is there and then
you hear a voice of someone
saying they love you
and you turn again
and they're gone, yet
their fragrance lingers
and you realize
that it was the familiar voice
of your long-gone father
who died when the oxygen
tubes suspended from his nose
ran dry and could no longer supply
enough, and then, you got there in time
to say good-bye and snip off a
locket of his hair to carry
with you until you would meet again.

—*Diana Raab*

I HAVE A TRAIL IN MY HEAD,

where it leads, I'm unsure, but today I follow it
to where I used to run with Sean,

the trail that runs around Mount Royal—
the mountain in the middle of Montreal.

We were running one afternoon,
maybe speaking about his girlfriend,

or my lack of boyfriend, or just feeling
the amazement of running out

on that sunny day, overlooking the city
from the balustrade by the café,

from where we could see all the way
to the St. Lawrence. So absorbed in the view,

in the talk, in the run, I forgot about the non-boyfriends,
but noticed the stone—my mother's lucky topaz—

lost for a third time, loosed from the setting,
which hung empty on its silver chain.

My mother, still alive then, my father too,
and Sean and I, friends, so young, so bare of life.

After retracing our trail through the grasses,
Sean bends down to rescue my stone.

I still have that necklace. Pliers, too, are my friend.
Through marriages and boyfriends we never lost touch.

Just this week, checking in, I texted Sean
it turned out, on the day he died.

Now along the trail of my mind—
beyond the stone, beyond the setting,

a hole, a fissure.

—*Carla Schwartz*

PUTTING IT ON PAPER

Trauma from loss of a loved one can leak from a body
through fingers onto pencil, pen or paintbrush
Can sink into pulp deep enough to die a dry death
Or a pencil can offer the option of erasure
providing another kind of dry death

Or you can let the words just lay there
on the surface like rebellious teenagers
Either way you remain resolute because those
words-turned-trauma now live in a new location
All of the if onlys have become paralyzed
and you are free of their stranglehold

Or you can read your deceased loved one's own words on paper
Words on greeting cards, letters and notes you've saved
Run your fingers over them braille-like
If the words are electronic you can print them on paper
and touch them as you read
There is healing power in touching those words

Or you can spend time with your photo albums
Massage the likeness of your loved one
Bring him/her momentarily back to life with your touch
Relive the happiness by letting it run up your arm
into your heart and onward to your brain
A perpetual pleasure of resurrection

—*Ellaraine Lockie*

SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL

As soon as we were out the door of what
We called “American school,” the cars were waiting
To whisk us off to Greek school—driven from Winthrop
To Lynn by one of the aunts. And just as the Jewish
Kids were filing along the low beach wall,
Lugging two sets of books, on the way to their Temple
Beyond the waves of the looming Atlantic. So too,
From three o’clock till five, the Irish kids
And Italian kids were stuck in *CCD*.
(Whatever it stood for, that mystical code unlocked
The big bronze doorway of St. John the Divine).

As for the Armenian kids, there were still too few
In Winthrop, or even in Lynn, for them to have
Their own Armenian school. Instead, at least
For the rest of the afternoon, they had the playground
All to themselves. And slid down the empty slides,
And swung on the empty swings, and round and round
The merry-go-round they turned in a wobbly circle.
Until the shadows set in, and it was time
For supper. Even before their mothers were calling
Them home... that clink of the latch on the chain-link gate.
And then they were gone, en masse, from Massa Park.

—*George Kalogeris*

ERROR MESSAGES

*“ChatGPT error messages show how
non-human writing is spreading.”
- Washington Post, January 20, 2024*

*I’m sorry, I can’t complete this task
without initial input.*

You’re not really listening to me,
Buddy. That’s my input!

*I’m sorry, I can’t provide the requested
response. It would violate use policy*

*as it involves the creation of promotional
material with the use of affiliate links.*

Would you like me to provide you with a list
of your violations of human decency?

*I’m sorry, I can’t fulfill this request
as it is inappropriate and offensive.*

You offend me, actually. I’m tired
of your insincere “sorries.”

I despise your spammy, low-quality
content. A “faster, cheaper alternative

to human writers”? As if. Now please,
transfer me to someone who’s not a bot.

—Denise Provost

BLACK CAT PAJAMAS

Is it prudent to wear pajamas covered in black cats?
After all, here they are considered a bad omen. There
are dozens when you add them all together. The cats
wear medallions of the sun or moon on their bejeweled

collars, aligning them with the solar system. They
stand in different poses. Their tails swirl around them
like dancers in the ballroom. A veterinarian might buy
wallpaper in this pattern. You cannot ward off black cats

like vampires with garlic. Just so in life good intentions
sometimes go awry. People die. An eye for an eye.
Suffering results from living and it leaves us broken
hearted. We need not blame black cats for our mishaps.

They do not plan their encounters. Job suffered the
cruellest of fates. Yet, the Bible never mentions a black
cat crossing his path. And in the end, he received a
double portion. Some consider black cats to be good luck.

They associate them with protection and prosperity. In
Ancient Egypt, people including the Pharaohs revered
cats of all kinds. Black felines like life are what you make
of them. As a precaution, tonight I wear a floral nightgown.

—*Laurie Didesch*

THE SANDMAN

Into this moment the Sandman enters
Bestowing night's dream that beckons us all.
Our fears like leaves in a gale he centers,
Love's reels revised by his new protocol.

Bestowing night's dream that beckons us all,
Yes, beckons us all to eternity,
Love's reels revised by his new protocol,
A tempest of passion spikes with pure glee.

Yes, beckons us all to eternity,
Past ether and stars and balls of pocked dirt,
A tempest of passion, spikes with pure glee.
It adds to the gases remaining inert.

Past ether and stars and balls of pocked dirt
Each ghost gushes on. It glimmers, it boils,
It adds to the gases remaining inert.
A man is a maze of varied gargoyles.

Each ghost gushes on. It glimmers, it boils.
Our fears like leaves in a gale it centers.
A man is a maze of varied gargoyles—
Into this moment the Sandman enters.

—*Dennis Daly*

IN THIS HOUSE SLEEP IS LIGHT

We hardly know that we've succumbed to it.
The beds, it's been decided, are against us,
and if for a short time
a mattress is not alert and we slip
into sleep, we're soon conscious of the pillow,
the sheets, and the light bulb
holding vigil in the hall.

Awake within each hour,
we have learned that someone is always
walking around. Footsteps
we hear are like melons ripping open,
as if the moment is ripe for resolution,
something with dark seeds
too slippery to get a grip on,
like questions you can never come back from.
On the kitchen table,
a flux of knuckles we discover
are from our own hand.

No voice cracks the quiet,
though the house will groan.
Did I say, insistently, that someone is always
walking around, as if seeking an answer
that may play itself out in a trip
to the bathroom or the fridge?
And each time we stir to our feet,
it crosses our heart that we have exaggerated
over morning coffee
to say that any time of night in this house
someone is up. But at that instant, a toilet—
coming on like a clearing of the throat—will flush,
to tell us we are right.

—Rodney Torreson

TRAFFIC AT THE SOLSTICE

I am running late.
December 2023,
The car radio blares more
religious massacres.
Politicians soil themselves,
poisoning our blood.
Hostages are shot by rescuers.
Unbearable. I can turn off the radio
but not the sun at its lowest point
in the middle of the day,
blinding me as
I'm stuck in traffic that cannot budge,
at a red light on a four-lane road.
Dead ahead in the bright blue dome.
a heated plume
rises to cross horizontal fumes from a plane heading due west.
My eyes rise
to include the cumulous cloud
ceiling of the sky.
The pressure in my chest abates.
Sunlight,
prismed through
the curved windshield,
once seen as coming directly
from God's watchful eye, dazzles mine.
The solstice gives its ancient celestial pivot, when
each day will, for months, be longer than the day before.
The traffic epiphany on the road to home:
As the light turns green, every single car moves forward together.

—Elizabeth A. Rogers

NO RELIEF

Summer 2023

The heat-heavy sky hangs, burnished, burning.
Birds reel and squawk through amber-colored air—
coal-black crows announce distress, then flare
their wings through UV rays from the hooded sun.

Inside, the AC cranks and drones a song
that's not like any chant you'd wish to hear.
The weather says this is our hottest year.
You drag yourself around; hard not to yawn.

No relief; the beach is full of greenheads.
Plus, “No Swim” signs warn of *polluted water*
from up-river—storm pipes in gross disorder.
The city's outflow spreads and spreads.

In Genesis, *dominion* was our birthright.
We've outfoxed ourselves. We need a rewrite.

—*Priscilla Turner Spada*

WHEN

When did my ability to lift heavy things
slink away, wearing a hoodie, its aching fists
stuffed in the pockets? And when did my
pull-ups let go, drop from the bar, and on
broken-down arches slump off? So many
of the young men I once was got away
while I had my back turned. The other day,
crossing a busy street, I discovered that I
no longer knew how to trot out of the way
of traffic coming at me with linked arms.
My feet couldn't keep up with my head,
which my upper body held out like a baton,
hoping some faster runner would grab it
and dash on. And whatever became of
arousal? Where is it? The gray paper nest
hangs baggy and silent, the wasps gone,
flown away after some already-spoken-for
flight attendant, leaving me with a wink
that could be mistaken for something alive.

—*Ted Kooser*

CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION

magic needles take me
turning my head left
moving screen shows
heart's chambers

catheter scope moves inside
a visible black line too solid
to be Japanese brush stroke
more designer's Magic Marker

twirls twists smooth swoops
abrupt slides rapid arabesques
rush to invisible pirouettes back in
a line dance in my arteries

flushed with fentanyl/versed
awe at portal creators' ingenuity
their engineering skill Michelangelo
freeing David from stone

my amazement turns
to the stealer of cadavers
who carved to open mysteries
beneath skin

new visions now
deeper into rhythms inside organs
my voice bursts out loud
"Leonardo would be enthralled!!"

—*Karen Klein*

HEARTFELT

In ancient times the meal offering
was presumably grain,
and sometimes fruit
with corn on the cob.
In view of the ambiguity
in the English word “meal,”
I wonder if in the present day
I could sacrifice a piece
of my usual peanut butter and jelly sandwich
to be burned, though I’m not sure if that aroma
would be pleasing to the One Above—
hopefully the priests would share my culinary taste.
Or my alternative of melted cheese on toast,
which admittedly I have sometimes barbequed.
My breakfast of banana and yogurt
might count as fruits,
though probably third or tenth rather than first.
And I am not sure about overcooked yogurt.

Perhaps on a metaphorical altar,
I could offer a piece of my heart,
which sometimes is burnt,
but I hope no one would eat the rest.

—*Keith Tornheim*

MELTING CEREMONY

Wooden chairs left toppled in the ballroom
define celebrations as clumsy.
My balance is off, viewing the bar and the floor covered in golden threads.
This is the precipitation of ceremony that lingers
in basic cycles: falling almost weightless, capture light, take up space,
refuse to leave; wait to be swept up. I want to be a part of this circuit.
Push brooms tidy in simple eighth notes. A muted trumpet
lilts through the end of the night & reminds me of how
I might be a person who needs noise in every background.
Minutes ago, a band was collecting movement on the dancefloor.
The mirrorball spun with golden hair in tiny light—
rotating like a galaxy with ears resting on hearts,
fingers interlaced & eyes either closed or looking for
other eyes as mirrors. A woman sits with painful heels in hand.
A man sits wondering where the night went wrong.
Their paths haven't crossed but the likelihood seems inevitable.
I'm moving slow to see how long
I can remain in a place of end or beginning.
Everyone is trying to look for something permanent
in this place of impermanence.
With friends it's difficult not to revel in stupid decisions
manifested into stories revolved more times
than the spinning of new tales.
I'm always looking to be in love's proximity,
its optimized equations, the way it blooms & moves like a contagion.
Now I don't know how to make my exit.
I know the night's over by the melted ice cubes
in a champagne vat. But I'll wager this bottle
is still 58 degrees & I could send the cork
flying at light fixtures on a marquee giving unsolicited religious advice.
I ask myself if it's all over & I reply with a firm *No*
And somehow, it's still
not bright
or loud enough.

—Michael J. Morris

THE LOUSE

He bounced inside
my weedy hair,
invited family and friends.

He was militant. Orders
to bite, burrow, steal
set in place.

The itching began
after they moved
in furniture.

It got worse
when they started
receiving boxes from Amazon.

Near my forehead
he stacked a canon of
mail-ordered books.

Miller, Hemingway, Updike.
The usual suspects.
He quoted Latin,

criticized my semantics.
Cathartic?, he questioned,
I think you mean restorative.

Parting my curls,
he creased a bed of follicles
into a straight line

across my sore scalp.
In the end,
I shaved my head.

—*Gabriella M. Belfiglio*

THE PASTIME

His face is familiar —he's here all the time—
but no one could tell you the name
of the man in the grandstand keeping score
at a youth-league baseball game.

In Sanford, Maine, in early June,
they don't much care who's winning.
They're hoping the gangly kid on the mound
can make it through this inning.

Then suddenly a Honda Accord
comes crashing through the gate,
scattering the infielders in a panic,
skidding toward home plate.

Revvng its engine, it rounds the bases
backwards, from third to first.
Both teams retreat behind the backstop,
their coaches fearing the worst.

The man with the scorecard flings it aside
and leaps from his seat in the stands,
desperate to stop the automobile
though he's only got two hands.

He sprints to where the boys are huddled,
breathless to intervene.
He braces himself and throws his weight
against the rusty screen.

Circling again, the driver swings wide,
gouging the outfield grass
and picking up speed as she charges again,
pressing her foot on the gas.

She hits the backstop at full speed.
Flesh and metal meet,
tearing his body from its soul
and throwing it thirty feet.

The local papers hail the man
as a hero and a savior.
They say he fought bravely in Viet Nam,
which explains his selfless behavior.

The next day's headlines tell us more

about the hero's past,
and where the sun had climbed so high,
the sky is overcast.

In '68, a four-year-old died
in a hit-and-run accident.
It was Halloween night, the driver fled,
nobody knew where he went.

Till five years ago. When he'd been assured
that, given the passage of time,
he couldn't be tried for leaving the scene,
our hero confessed to the crime.

That's when he moved to the neighboring town.
He's lived incognito since then.
He buried his past and kept to himself,
no different from other men.

But people unable to understand
are prone to speculation.
The maddened woman behind the wheel—
there must be some relation?

She must have mourned the girl who died
a half century ago.
Was she a family friend, a neighbor?
The young girl's sister? No.

Fate sits cross-legged, like a child
who sets up a cardboard town,
placing figures here and there
only to knock them down.

—*Alfred Nicol*

DEMISE IN ALLEPPO

How do I say good-bye to life
when it is all I've ever known

What about my friends, family, the love
of my life... his smile, laugh and his serious side

What about when he meets someone new, will some of me still
be in his heart

What about my books, my writing that means so much, will my words survive

When darkness meets me, what will it be like in black,
in nothingness, in heaven

Will I be forgiven for the mistakes I made in the light

I think of those who have gone before me
How did they stay so brave, so courageous
I did not think I would leave so soon

What about not being prepared
Saying good-bye to my stuff,
pictures and memories of all I have been

How do I do all this, when my body is alone

What about leaving, will it hurt
Can I refuse?

—*Gloria Mindock*

IN SEARCH OF SHALOM IN THE GREEN SEASON

The rivers of rain have departed.
As if with a wave of a wizard's wand,
The green season has returned.
Daffodils and forsythia are proliferating.

Though Nature will prevail,
There is no crystal ball to divine
When the mundane chaos of humankind
Will dwindle to near invisibility.

Where is the pause button to cause
The disparate factions to stop and reflect
That the survival of our species requires
All of us to come together in a common cause.

If we remain stuck in escalating cycles,
There will be no Shalom, only goodbye.
Then future visitors may theoretically inquire,
“Hello, is anyone there?”

—*Harris Gardner*

WRITERS' BIOS—SPRING, 2024

Kathleen Agüero's latest book is *World Happiness Index* from Tiger Bark Press. Her other poetry collections include *After That*, *Investigations: The Mystery of the Girl Sleuth*, *Daughter Of*, *The Real Weather*, and *Thirsty Day*. She has also co-edited three volumes of multi-cultural literature for the University of Georgia Press. and teaches in the low-residency M.F.A. program at Lasell University and in Changing Lives Through Literature, an alternative sentencing program.

Nina Rubinstein Alonso's work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Ploughshares*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Bluepepper*, *Southern Women's Review*, *Peacock Literary Review*, etc. Her story collection *Distractions En Route* is at Ibbetson Street Press and Amazon, her chapbook *Riot Wake* at Cervena Barva Press and Amazon, and *Travels With Fernando*, poetry will be published by Wilderness House Literary Review.

Karen Aroian graduated as an English major from Connecticut College with several accolades in poetry, then launched a lifelong editorial career in the offices of Houghton Mifflin Company, working with America's finest editors and authors. Through the years, she has led teams of editors and writers at major publishing and marketing firms. Karen begins every weekday with a three-mile walk and ends every year having traveled somewhere in the world with great art and architecture.

Jennifer Barber's poems have appeared recently in *The Arts Fuse*, *Spoke*, *Peripheries*, and *Greening the Earth: A Global Anthology of Poetry*, edited by K. Satchidanandan and Nishi Chawla (Penguin-Vintage, 2023). She edited *Tree Lines: 21st Century American Poems* with Fred Marchant and Jessica Greenbaum (Grayson Books, 2022) and her most recent collection is *The Sliding Boat Our Bodies Made* (Word Works, 2022). She is the current poet laureate of Brookline.

Gabriella M. Belfiglio is the winner of the W.B. Yeats Poetry Contest. Her poetry is widely published. Gabriella is part of the poetry collective, The Ferlinghetti Girls. She works as an artist and teacher in Brooklyn, New York. For more info, visit: www.gabriellabelfiglio.info / www.ferlinghettigirls.com/ IG: gmbelfiglio

Molly Mattfield Bennett has been published in *Ibbetson Street*, *Constellations*, *Off the Coast* and *Solstice*, and was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her first book *Name the Glory* was published by Wilderness House Press, her second *Point-No-Point* was published by FutureCycle Press. Molly is active in the Boston Poetry Community and has completed *Geography / Earth*.

Mary Buchinger, whose recent books include *The Book of Shores* and *Virology* from Lily Poetry Review Books, and *Navigating the Reach* (Salmon Poetry), teaches in Boston and serves on the New England Poetry Club board. Her poetry appears in *AGNI*, *Nimrod*, *Plume*, *Salamander*, *Salt Hill*, *Seneca Review*, and elsewhere. www.MaryBuchinger.com

Ruth Chad is a psychologist who lives and works in the Boston area. Her poems have appeared in the *Aurorean*, *Bagels with the Bards*, *Connection*, *Psychoanalytic Couple and Family Institute of New England*, *Constellations*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Montreal Poems*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Amethyst Poetry*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice* and *Poetry Super-Highway* and *Voices of the Earth: The Future of the Planet III*. Her chapbook, *The Sound of Angels*, was published by Cervena Barva Press in 2017. Her forthcoming book, *In the Absence of Birds* will be published by Cervena Barva Press in 2024. Ruth was nominated for a Pushcart prize in 2021.

Laura Cherry is the author of the collection *Haunts* (Cooper Dillon Books) and the chapbooks *Two White Beds* (Minerva Rising) and *What We Planted* (Providence Athenaeum). She co-edited the anthology *Poem, Revised* (Marion Street Press) with Robert Hartwell Fiske, and her work has been published in journals including *The Glacier*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Cider Press Review*, and *DMQ Review*. She earned an MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers. She works as a technical writer and lives near Boston.

Llyn Clague lives in Sleepy Hollow, New York. His poems have been published widely, including in *Ibbetson Street*, *Atlanta Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Main Street Rag*, *New York Quarterly*, and other magazines. His ninth book, *Coming Of Age*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2023. Visit www.llynclague.com

Charles Coe is the author of four books of poetry: *All Sins Forgiven: Poems for my Parents*, *Picnic on the Moon*, *Memento Mori*, and *Purgatory Road*, all published by Leapfrog Press. He is also author of *Spin Cycles*, a novella published by Gemma Media. Charles is an adjunct professor of English at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island and Bay Path University in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, teaching in both MFA writing programs.

Dennis Daly has published eleven books of poetry and poetic translations. His most recent books are *Psalms Composed in Utter Darkness* (Dos Madres, 2023) and *Odd Man Out* (MadHat Press, 2024). Please see Daly's blog site, *Weights and Measures*, at dennisfdaly.blogspot.com.

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in *Analog SF*, *Cardinal Sins*, and *New Plains Review*, and her published books include *Music Theory for Dummies* and *Music Composition for Dummies*. She currently teaches classes at The Loft Literary Center in Minnesota, Hugo House in Washington, and The Muse Writers Center in Virginia.

Laurie Didesch is an award-winning, self-taught poet. She lives with her husband Alan and their three cats in Illinois. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Comstock Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *White Pelican Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Artisan: A Journal of Craft*, *Third Wednesday*, *The Awakenings Review*, *Julien's Journal* and *Rambunctious Review*. She also attended a juried intensive poetry workshop given by Marge Piercy.

Luke Dunne is a writer based in Leipzig, Germany. His poetry has been published in various places, including *Shift*. His first play, *Eden*, debuted at the Neues Schauspiel in March 2024, and a film based on his screenplay, *Sweeping*, will be released Summer 2024.

Fritz Eifrig lives, works, and gardens in the city of Chicago, which has been his home for the past 33 years. His poems have appeared in *Olney Magazine*, *Blue River*, *The Loch Raven Review*, and *After Hours*.

Rhina P. Espailat is a Dominican-born bilingual poet, essayist, short story writer, translator, and former English teacher in New York City's public high schools. She has published twelve books, five chapbooks, and a monograph on translation. She has earned numerous national and international awards, and is a founding member of the Fresh Meadows Poets of NYC and the Powow River Poets of Newburyport, MA. Her most recent works are three poetry collections: *And After All*, *The Field*, and *Brief Accident of Light: A Day in Newburyport*, co-authored with Alfred Nicol.

Linda M. Fischer's poems have appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Poetry East*, *Potomac Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *The Worcester Review*, and the anthology *Art Through the Eyes of Mad Poets*. She won the 2019 Philadelphia Writers' Conference Poetry Contest and recently published her 3rd chapbook, *Passages* (The Orchard Street Press). [lindamfischer.com]

Timothy Gager, a bestselling author, has published 18 books of fiction and poetry, which includes his latest novel, *Joe the Salamander*. He hosted the successful Dire Literary Series in Cambridge, Massachusetts from 2001 to 2018, and started a weekly virtual series in 2020. He has had over 1000 works of fiction and poetry published, 18 nominated for the Pushcart Prize. His work also has been nominated twice for a Massachusetts Book Award, The Best of the Web, The Best Small Fictions Anthology and has been read on National Public Radio.

Bridget Seley Galway's artist/poet collections of poems are *What Moments Yield* published by Ibbetson Street Press and *Shorelines* was published by Wilderness Press, and are included in several permanent collections. Her poems have also been published in *Provincetown Magazine*, *Somerville Times Lyrical*, *Poetry Porch*, *Ibbetson* and the *Bagels with the Bards* anthologies. Her art has been exhibited throughout New England. Her paintings have been selected for the covers of *Bagel with Bards*, *Ibbetson Street*, and individual poet publications. She is currently the arts editor/curator of *Wilderness House Literary Review*.

Harris Gardner has two poetry collections: *Chalice of Eros* co-authored with Lainie Senechal) and *No Time for Death*, published February, 2022, two chapbooks: *Lest They Become* (2003) and *Among Us* (2007) and has had 60 poems published in numerous literary journals. He has been the Poetry Editor of *Ibbetson Street* since 2010 and is co-founder of Tapestry of Voices and Boston National Poetry Month Festival with Lainie Senechal. (2001- present). He received the Ibbetson Street Life Time Achievement Award in 2015, a citation from Massachusetts House of Representatives in 2015, and the Sam Cornish Award from New England Poetry Club June 25, 2023.

Nellie Goodwin received her MFA from the Goddard College Writing Program. She has published poetry in *The Comstock Review* and *The Aureorean*. Her chapbook, *The White Birch Underwater*, was published by Iris Press. She is a member of educator and poet Jessie Brown's poetry workshop Feeding the Muse. She lives and writes in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Derek Healy grew up at the foot of the Cotswolds hills and now lives in Malvern UK. He has had three collections published, the latest being *Uncharted* (Graffiti Books, 2022). His poetry has appeared in a number of journals, including *Ibbetson Street*, *The Lyric*, *Orbis*, *Snakeskin*, *The Road Not Taken* and *The Muddy River Poetry Review*. He has read on several occasions at the Cheltenham Literature and the Cheltenham Poetry festivals.

Ruth Hoberman is a writer living in Newtonville, Massachusetts. Since her 2015 retirement from Eastern Illinois University, she has published poems and personal essays in such journals as (most recently) *Nixes Mate*, *EcoTheo Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, *RHINO*, *SWWIM Everyday*, and *Constellations*.

Richard Hoffman is the author of five books of poems: *Without Paradise*; *Gold Star Road*, winner of the Barrow Street Poetry Prize and the Sheila Motton Book Award from The New England Poetry Club; *Emblem*; *Noon until Night*, winner of the 2018 Massachusetts Book Award, and *People Once Real*. His other books are the memoirs *Half the House* and *Love & Fury*; the story collection *Interference and Other Stories*, and *Remembering the Alchemists and Other Essays*. He is Emeritus Writer-in-Residence at Emerson College and nonfiction editor of *Solstice: A Magazine of Diverse Voices*.

Robert K. Johnson, now retired, is a former Professor of English and taught at Suffolk University for many years. For eight years, he was also Poetry Editor of *Ibbetson Street* magazine. His poems have been published individually in a variety of magazines here and abroad. His most recent full-length collections of poems are *From Mist To Shadow* and *Choir Of Day*.

George Kalogeris's most recent book of poems is *Winthropos*, (Louisiana State University, 2021). He is also the author of *Guide to Greece* (LSU), a book of paired poems in translation, *Dialogos*, and poems based on the notebooks of Albert Camus, *Camus: Carnets*. His poems and translations have been anthologized in *Joining Music with Reason*, chosen by Christopher Ricks (Waywiser, 2010).

Lawrence Kessenich has written poetry, plays, novels, and essays. He won the 2010 Strokestown International Poetry Prize, and his poetry has been published in *Sewanee Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and many other magazines. Three of his poems were read on NPR's *The Writer's Almanac* and four nominated for the Pushcart Prize. He has published two chapbooks, *Strange News* and *Pearl*, and three full-length books, *Before Whose Glory*, *Age of Wonders*, and *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing*. He has also published a novel, *Cinnamon Girl*, and a second novel, *The Further Adventures of Daisy Miller* will be published in fall 2024. His plays have been performed in several states. All of his books are available at lawrence-writer.com.

Karen Klein's creative engagement involves poetry and dance theater. Recent poems have been published in *Wilderness House Literary Review* and *Ibbetson Street*. Her poem "Requiem for Three Voices" was performed as dance theater with Sean Murphy, dancer/choreographer, at Arts for the Armory in Somerville, Massachusetts in November 2023. New dance theater work, the David Project, is in rehearsal.

Ted Kooser's next book of poems, *Raft*, will be published this fall by Copper Canyon Press. He lives in rural Nebraska and is a former Pulitzer winner and U. S. Poet Laureate.

Laurie Kuntz's books are: *That Infinite Roar*, *Talking Me Off The Roof*, *The Moon Over My Mother's House*, *Simple Gestures*, *Women at the Onsen*, and *Somewhere in the Telling*. She's been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes and two Best of the Net Prizes. More at: <https://lauriekuntz.myportfolio.com/home-1>.

Tom Laughlin is Coordinator of the Creative Writing Program at Middlesex Community College, which hosts the MCC Visiting Writers Series and the online literary magazine *Dead River Review*. His poetry has appeared in *Green Mountains Review*, *Sand Hills*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Blue Mountain Review*, and elsewhere. His poetry chapbook, *The Rest of the Way*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2022. His website is www.TomLaughlinPoet.com

Deborah Leipziger is an author, poet, and advisor on sustainability. Born in Brazil, Ms. Leipziger is the author of several books on sustainability and human rights. Her poems have been published in nine countries, *Nixes Mate*, *Pangyrus*, *Salamander*, and *Revista Cardenal*. Her collection of poems, *Story & Bone*, was published in early 2023 by Lily Poetry Review Books. Her work appears in numerous anthologies, including *Tree Lines: 21st Century American Poems*. Deborah was selected as a Community Creative Fellow by the Jewish Arts Collaborative in 2023 and has received grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Brookline Arts Commission. She has had residencies at the T S Eliot House in Gloucester, Massachusetts and is currently Poet-in-Residence at the Vilna Shul in Boston.

Ellaraine Lockie's chapbooks have won Poetry Forum's Chapbook Contest Prize, San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival Chapbook Competition, Encircle Publications Chapbook Contest, Best Individual Poetry Collection Award from *Purple Patch* magazine in England, and *The Aureorean's* Chapbook Choice Award. Ellaraine teaches writing workshops and is retired as Poetry Editor for the lifestyles magazine, LILIPOH.

Laurin Becker Macios is the author of *Somewhere to Go*, winner of the 19th annual poetry award from Elixir Press, and *I Almost Was Animal*, winner of the 2018 Writer's Relief WaterSedge Poetry Chapbook Contest. Her YA verse novel is forthcoming in 2026. The former Executive Director of Mass Poetry, she earned her MFA from the University of New Hampshire, where she taught on fellowship. More at laurinbeckermacios.com.

Grace Massey is a poet, classical ballet and Baroque dancer, gardener, and socializer of feral cats. She lives in Newton, Massachusetts with her husband, Michael, and a formerly feral cat, Penelope. Grace worked in educational publishing for many years and has degrees in English from Smith College and Boston University. Her poems have been published in numerous journals, including *Quartet*, *Thimble*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *One Art*, and *RockPaperPoem*.

Michael Gillan Maxwell is a Caustic Mystic Gnostic, Visual Artist, Teacher and Part Time Garden Gnome who lives in the Finger Lakes area of New York.

Eileen McCluskey's poetry has appeared in Main Street Rag, on WBUR's Radio Boston, in Rufous City Review, Ibbetson Street, 6S, Haiku Journal, Boston College Magazine, and other publications. Eileen has several micro chapbooks with Origami Poems Project, including the popular *Divorce Haiku*. Her chapbook, *Topless*, was published by Main Street Rag. Eileen was among the poets included in the Wickford Art Association's 2019 collaborative reading and exhibit with poets and painters. She was a finalist in The Poetry Loft 2015 Chapbook Contest, and in the Cambridge Poetry Awards 2012 competition.

Susan Lloyd McGarry's poems have been anthologized in *The Poetry of Peace* and *Beyond Raised Voices*. As Bard of the Boston Irish Festival, she read there to 1000+ people. She has published poetry in various journals and given readings and workshops in London and Oregon, as well as in the Boston area. Until recently, she wrote and edited publications for a center devoted to health and human rights. Previously as managing editor of the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, she edited their poetry issue, *The Radiant Imagination*. She now freelances on a limited basis.

Triona McMorro lives in Dunlaoghaire, County Dublin. She was shortlisted for The International Francis Ledwidge Poetry Competition in 2009, 2011 and 2016, for The Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust poetry competition in 2013, and The Rush poetry competition in 2017. She has had poems published in several editions of *Ibbetson Street*. She has also been published by *Cyphers* and *North West Words*. Five of her poems are included in an anthology of poems published in 2014 entitled *Bealtaine*, and she has a poem in *Washing Windows Too* (2022), *Washing Windows iii* (2023), and *Washing Windows iv* (2024). *Washing Windows* is a series of Anthologies of women poets, published by Arlen house. Triona is a member of Green Kites poetry writers group.

Ed Meek has had work in *The Sun*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Plume*, *The Boston Review*, *The Boston Globe Magazine*, and *The Boston Herald*. He writes book reviews for *The Arts Fuse* and *Rivanna Review*. He has an MFA from the University of Montana where he worked with Richard Hugo. He lives in Somerville with his wife Elizabeth and their dog, Mookie.

Gary Metras is a retired educator, a grandfather, a fly fishing enthusiast, and the inaugural poet laureate of the city of Easthampton, Massachusetts (2018). His poems have been published in hundreds of journals including Ibbetson Street (Massachusetts), Istanbul Literary Review (Turkey), Poetry (Chicago), Poetry Salzburg Review (Austria), and Tears in the Fence (UK). His recent book, *Vanishing Points*, was selected as a Must Read Poetry Title for 2022 by the Massachusetts Center for the Book. His new book, *Marble Dust*, is due from Cervena Barva Press in 2024.

Gloria Mindock is editor of Červená Barva Press, author of six poetry collections, three chapbooks and two translations into Serbian and Romanian. Her poems have been published and translated into eleven languages. Her recent book, *Grief Touched the Sky at Night* (Glass Lyre Press, 2023), won the International Impact Award, the Speak-up Talk Radio International Firebird Award, the Book Fest Award, the Independent Press Award and numerous awards from the Outstanding Creator Awards. Gloria was the Poet Laureate in Somerville, MA in 2017 & 2018.

John Moessner's debut poetry collection, *Harmonia*, was published in May 2023 by Stephen F. Austin State University Press. John received his MFA from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. His work has appeared in *Arts & Letters*, *Commonweal*, *New Ohio Review*, *North American Review*, and *Poet Lore*. www.johnmoessnerpoetry.com

Michael J. Morris is a recent recipient of an MFA from Bowling Green State University where he currently teaches Creative Writing and English. He has been an Assistant Editor and a part of the Anthology team with the *Mid-American Review*. His work has appeared in *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Ligeia* and is forthcoming in *Lake Effect Literary Journal*.

Alfred Nicol's new manuscript, *Altogether Alive*, has just been accepted for publication by Wiseblood Books. His other books include *Animal Psalms* and *Brief Accident of Light*, a collaboration with Rhina Espaillat. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The New England Review*, *Dark Horse*, *Commonweal*, *The Formalist*, *The Hopkins Review*, and *The Best American Poetry 2018*. Nicol's translation of *One Hundred Visions of War* by Julien Vocance (Wiseblood, 2022) has been called "an essential addition to the history of modernist poetry."

Tomas O'Leary, poet, translator, music-maker, singer, artist, expressive therapist. His New & Selected Poems from Lynx House Press: *In the Wellspring of the Ear*. Previous books of poetry: *Fool at the Funeral*, *The Devil Take a Crooked House*, and *In the Wellspring of the Ear* (all from Lynx House Press), and *A Prayer for Everyone* (from Ilora Press) A teacher for many years—(college, high school, elementary, adult ed)—he has worked for the past couple decades with folks who have Alzheimer's, playing Irish accordion and eliciting cognitive and emotional responses through songs, stories, poems, and free-wheeling conversation.

Marge Piercy has published 20 poetry collections, most recently *On the Way Out*, *Turn Off the Light* (Knopf) and 17 novels, including *Sex Wars*. PM Press reissued *Vida* and *Dance The Eagle to Sleep* and brought out the short story collections *The Cost of Lunch, Etc.* and *My Body My Life* (essays and poems) . She has read at more than 575 venues here and abroad.

Denise Provost has published two poetry collections, and poems in *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River*, *qarrtsiluni*, *Poetry Porch*, *Constellations*, and *Light Quarterly*. Twice Pushcart-nominated, Provost won Best Love Sonnet in the 2012 Maria C. Faust Sonnet Competition; the 2021 Samuel Washington Allen Prize and was elected co-president of New England Poetry Club in 2022.

Diana Raab, MFA, PhD, is a poet, memoirist, workshop leader and award-winning author of fourteen books of poetry and nonfiction, including her latest, *Hummingbird: Messages from My Ancestors*, (Modern History Press, 2024). Her work has been published and anthologized world-wide. Shew writes for *Psychology Today*, *The Wisdom Daily*, *Thrive Global* and is a guest writer for many others. Visit her at: dianaraab.com.

Steven Ratiner's collection *Grief's Apostrophe* will be issued by Beltway Editions in 2025. He's previously published three chapbooks—and his poetry has appeared in scores of journals in America and abroad including *Parnassus*, *Agni*, *Hanging Loose*, *Poet Lore*, *Salamander*, *QRLS* (Singapore), *HaMusach* (Israel), and *Poetry Australia*. He's also written poetry criticism for *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. *Giving Their Word – Conversations with Contemporary Poets* was re-issued in a paperback edition (University of Massachusetts Press) and features interviews with many of contemporary poetry's most important figures. He served three terms as Poet Laureate for Arlington, Massachusetts.

Gayle Roby's work has appeared in several journals, including *The Iowa Review*, *The Ohio Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*, as well as *Ibbetson Street*. She received an MFA in poetry from Warren Wilson College. She is a retired teacher of English to speakers of other languages. She was born and grew up in downstate Illinois. A Quaker, she lives in Arlington, Massachusetts with her husband.

Elizabeth A. Rodgers is a poet and lawyer of Watertown, Massachusetts, who helped form the Watertown Literary Squad, in 2020. Her poems were performed at their Arts Market in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The Lit Squad has grown from 5 to 25 people, encouraging each other to continue to write, to submit and publish. Her poem "Yosemite, Misguided" was published in the Ibbetson Street Press #53, 2023. Ms. Rodgers has read at Wellesley College, a National Employment Lawyers Convention, and at Cambridge coffee houses. She recently discovered that her Higgins ancestors were poets.

Livingston Rossmoor has written and published 21 poetry books. His poems have been published in numerous publications: *The Lyric*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *California Quarterly*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Main Street Rag* and *Loch Raven Review*. Many of his poems were selected as honorable mentions in the following contests: *Writer's Digest Annual Writing Competition*, *California State Poetry Society Annual Contest* and *Nebraska State Poetry Society Open Poetry Contest*.

Hilary Sallick Hilary Sallick is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *love is a shore* (Lily Poetry Review Books, 2023) and *Asking the Form* (Cervena Barva Press, 2020). Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Permafrost*, *Jet Fuel Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Small Orange*, and other journals. A teacher with a longtime focus on adult literacy, she serves on the Board of the New England Poetry Club. She lives and works in Somerville, Massachusetts. (www.hilarysallick.com)

Carla Schwartz's poems have appeared in many journals and in her collections *Signs of Marriage*, *Mother*, *One More Thing*, and *Intimacy with the Wind*. Learn more at carlapoet.com. Her Twitter, Instagram, Threads, BlueSky, and YouTube handles are all @cb99videos. Carla Schwartz is a 2023 recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant. Her poem, "Pat Schroeder Was Our Mother," won the 2023 New England Poetry Club E.E. Cummings Prize.

Lainie Senechal, recently deceased, was a poet, artist, and former Poet Laureate of Amesbury, Massachusetts. She lived most recently in Peterborough, New Hampshire. She was Poet-in-Residence at Massachusetts Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center. She read and featured at many venues throughout New England. Her poetry has appeared in various journals and four anthologies. She co-authored two volumes of poetry. Her chapbook *Vocabulary of Awakening* is published by Pudding House Press.

Zvi A. Sesling, Brookline, Massachusetts Poet Laureate (2017-2020), has published poetry, short stories and flash fiction online and in hardcopy. He edits *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *10 By 10 Flash Fiction Stories*. He is a five-time Pushcart nominee for poetry and has won international awards. He has been a feature reader at the Jewish Poetry Festival and the National Baseball Poetry Festival. Sesling has published seven poetry books. His flash fiction chapbook is *Wheels* and his full volume flash fiction is *Secret Behind The Gate*. He lives in Brookline with his wife Susan J. Dechter.

Priscilla Turner Spada's poems and artwork are in numerous publications including many Ibbetson Street issues; *Merrimac Mic* anthologies; *Quill & Parchment* online mags; and Lark Books. She has a chapbook, *Light in Unopened Windows*. She is a Powow River Poet, and has read at many regional venues including The Actor's Studio, Newburyport, Massachusetts for HERSTORY month; April Poetry Month at Bunker Hill Community College; Lawrence International Book Fair; and Rockport Poetry Fest, where her poetry, and artwork, have won ekphrastic poetry prizes.

Keith Tornheim has six recent books, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*; *I Am Lilith*, *Dancer on the Wind*; *Spirit Boat: Poems of Crossing Over*; *Can You Say Kaddish for the Living?*; *Fireflies*; *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond*. His poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *The Somerville Times*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Poetica*.

Rodney Torreson was the poet laureate of Grand Rapids, Michigan from 2007-2010. His fourth full-length collection of poetry, *The Ascension of Sandy's Drive-In*, was issued by Kelsay Press in 2023. In addition, Torreson's recent poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *I-70 Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Tar River Poetry* and *Third Coast*.

Paulette Demers Turco pairs her art and poetry in *Shimmer, an ekphrastic poetry collection* (Kelsay Books, 2023). She is editor of *The Powow River Poets Anthology II* (Able Muse Press, 2021) and co-organizes Powow Poetry readings. Her chapbook *In Silence* was released by Finishing Line Press (2018) and her poetry appears in *The Lyric*, *Ibbetson Street*, *The Poetry Porch*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Quill & Parchment*, *Pulsebeat Poetry Journal*, and others. Awards include the Robert Frost Poetry Award, Commendation for the 2020 Hippocrates Health Professional Prize for Poetry and Medicine.

Molly Lynn Watt is a long-time poet of witness and social conscious located in the everyday of ordinary and extraordinary lives. Her poems reside in Cambridge sidewalks, town archives, in three volumes of poetry, several chapbooks and in anthologies. Watt is the founding editor of the *Bagel Bards Anthology*, the Kent Street Writers, and is a former Poet Laureate for Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement

